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## Aristotle's Metaphysics V 7 Revisited

Weiner, Sebastian F

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Sebastian F. Weiner

## Aristotle's *Metaphysics* V 7 Revisited

**abstract:** Aristotle's discussion of 'to be', presented in his *Metaphysics* V 7, has been much debated. Most scholars explain the Aristotelian 'to be' *kata symbebêkos* as a result of a so called 'unnatural predication'. By accepting this reading, Aristotle's distinction becomes necessarily blurred. The same holds with respect to Ross' reading of the passage according to which 'to be' *kath' hauto* is restricted to essential predications. The purpose of this paper is to show the inappropriateness of both readings and to offer a better one. In doing so, I will argue that Aristotle's concern is neither about various uses of the verb 'to be' in Ancient Greek nor about types of predication, but on ontology and its pitfalls.

**keywords:** Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, ontology, accidental, being

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I

In his *Metaphysics* V 7, Aristotle distinguishes two principal ways in which 'to be' is said, one he calls *kata symbebêkos* and the other *kath' hauto*.<sup>1</sup> Although Aristotelians are well acquainted with this terminology, it is far from being clear what is meant by it with respect to being. Readers who ask for a better understanding of this distinction in V 7 are confronted with a highly controversial debate. Kahn rightly warns us that "[t]he interpretation [...] is extremely difficult, and it is rare to find two commentators who agree here."<sup>2</sup> The passage appears to be Humpty-Dumpty: there seems to be no hope to bring all its parts together into one consistent interpretation.

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1 For what follows, I agree with Kirwan "that what he [Aristotle] says is meant to cover all parts of the verb", that is the infinite form *einai* as well as the third person *esti* and the participle *to on*. See *Aristotle—Metaphysics, Translated with Notes* by C. Kirwan (Oxford 1993<sup>2</sup>), 140.

2 C. Kahn 'Questions and Categories—Aristotle's doctrine in the light of modern research' in H. Hiz (ed.) *Questions* (Dordrecht 1978), 225–278, 274, note 51.

Thus, the attempt to provide a compelling interpretation must be starry-eyed since there is no scholarly agreement over the crucial points of this section. Notwithstanding, we should not abandon the attempt to make good sense out of it. If we are not able to explain such a fundamental distinction in Aristotle's thinking, it appears that we will not be in a position to fully understand his theory of predication and his ontology. This paper should shed some new light on this passage by discussing four major points which make its interpretation so complicated:

- (i) In 1017a9, one case of 'to be' *kata symbebêkos* is exemplified by the sentence 'A man is musical', and interpreters struggle with an explication of why this standard categorical predication renders to be *kata symbebêkos*.
- (ii) In 1017a29, 'to be' *kath' hauto* appears to be exemplified by the sentence 'A man is walking', which has the same logical form as the foregoing 'A man is musical'. However, the latter was introduced as an example of 'to be' *kata symbebêkos*. Thus, the distinction is jeopardized.
- (iii) In 1017a19, the not-pale is said 'to be' *kata symbebêkos*, and this reference appears to be ill-suited with respect to the classical interpretations of V 7.
- (iv) There is a passage in *De Int.* 11 where we get some evidence about what it means 'to be' *kata symbebêkos*. The passage's line of argumentation seems to undermine what scholars have said on V 7.

By pointing towards a possible solution for all four points, the paper should enrich and renew the discussion of this passage, which has been little regarded in recent times. In so doing, we will see that Aristotle's discussion is unique. Furthermore, we will be able to explain an omission scholars have wondered about, namely the fact that V 7 is not concerned with 'is' in the sense of 'is the same as' and 'exists'.<sup>3</sup>

Even after several readings, the section remains obscure:

1. That which is may be so called either coincidentally [*kata symbebêkos*] or in virtue of itself [*kath' hauto*]: coincidentally, as for instance we assert someone just to be musical, and a man musical, and someone musical a man; these things are said to be in a similar way as we say that someone musical builds, because being musical coincides in a housebuilder or a housebuilder in someone musical (for 'that this is this' signifies 'that in this this coincides'). And so it is in the cases mentioned:

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<sup>3</sup> Thorp's claim that Aristotle has simply forgotten a discussion of existence is a good example of the scholarly perplexity, see J. W. Thorp 'Aristotle's use of Categories – an easing of the oddness in *Metaphysica* V 7 –' in *Phronesis* 19, 3 (1974), 238–256, 254.

2. for when we say that a man is musical and someone musical a man, or that someone pale is musical or the latter pale, in one case it is because both coincide in the same thing, in another because something coincides in a thing that is, while the musical is a man because the musical coincides in the latter (in this way the not-pale is said to be, because what it coincides in is). Things are said to be coincidentally, then, are so said in these ways: either because both hold of the same thing that is, or because something holds of a thing that is, or because the thing itself, of which something holds, is and is predicated of the latter.
3. 'to be' in virtue of itself is said in the same way as the figures of predications signify 'to be'; for to the extent to which they are said, to be is signified. Since of predications some signify what a thing is, some of what quality it is, some of what quantity, some in relation to which, some a thing's doing or being affected, some where it is, some when, in all these cases to be signifies much the same. For there is no difference between 'a man is keeping healthy' and 'a man keeps healthy' or between 'a man is walking, or cutting' and 'a man walks, or cuts', and equally in the other cases. [Kirwan's translation, modified]<sup>4</sup>

Due to Aristotle's terse presentation, it is hard to offer a interpretation on the basis of this passage alone. Hence, there is a tradition of regarding *Posterior Analytics* I 22 as a clue to V 7.<sup>5</sup> In this section of the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle distinguishes two types of predications, one standard categorical one and a

4 1017a7-30: Τὸ ὄν λέγεται τὸ μὲν κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς τὸ δὲ καθ' αὐτό, κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς μὲν, οἷον τὸν δίκαιον μουσικὸν εἶναι φαμεν καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον μουσικὸν καὶ τὸν μουσικὸν ἄνθρωπον, παραπλησίως λέγοντες ὥσπερ τὸν μουσικὸν οἰκοδομεῖν ὅτι συμβέβηκε τῷ οἰκοδόμῳ μουσικῷ εἶναι ἢ τῷ μουσικῷ οἰκοδόμῳ (τὸ γὰρ τόδε εἶναι τόδε σημαίνει τὸ συμβεβηκέναι τῷδε τόδε), —οὕτω δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν εἰρημένων· τὸν γὰρ ἄνθρωπον ὅταν μουσικὸν λέγωμεν καὶ τὸν μουσικὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἢ τὸν λευκὸν μουσικὸν ἢ τοῦτον λευκόν, τὸ μὲν ὅτι ἄμφω τῷ αὐτῷ συμβεβήκασι, τὸ δ' ὅτι τῷ ὄντι συμβέβηκε, τὸ δὲ μουσικὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅτι τούτῳ τὸ μουσικὸν συμβέβηκεν (οὕτω δὲ λέγεται καὶ τὸ μὴ λευκὸν εἶναι, ὅτι ὃ συμβέβηκεν, ἐκεῖνο ἔστιν)· —τὰ μὲν οὖν κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς εἶναι λεγόμενα οὕτω λέγεται ἢ διότι τῷ αὐτῷ ὄντι ἄμφω ὑπάρχει, ἢ ὅτι ὄντι ἐκείνῳ ὑπάρχει, ἢ ὅτι αὐτὸ ἔστιν ὃ ὑπάρχει οὐ αὐτὸ κατηγορεῖται· καθ' αὐτὰ δὲ εἶναι λέγεται ὅσα περ σημαίνει τὰ σχήματα τῆς κατηγορίας· ὅσα γὰρ λέγεται, τοσαυταχῶς τὸ εἶναι σημαίνει. ἐπεὶ οὖν τῶν κατηγορουμένων τὰ μὲν τί ἐστι σημαίνει, τὰ δὲ ποῖον, τὰ δὲ ποσόν, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τι, τὰ δὲ ποιεῖν ἢ πάσχειν, τὰ δὲ πού, τὰ δὲ ποτέ, ἐκάστῳ τούτων τὸ εἶναι ταῦτο σημαίνει· οὐθὲν γὰρ διαφέρει τὸ ἄνθρωπος ὑγιαίνειν ἔστιν ἢ τὸ ἄνθρωπος ὑγιαίνει, οὐδὲ τὸ ἄνθρωπος βαδίζειν ἔστιν ἢ τέμνων τοῦ ἄνθρωπος βαδίζει ἢ τέμνει, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων.

5 Kahn refers back to Kapp and Gillespie, see C. Kahn 'Questions and Categories', 274, note 51; E. Tugendhat 'Über den Sinn der vierfachen Unterscheidung des Seins bei Aristoteles (Metaphysik V 7)' in *Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a. M. 1992), 136–144, 137.

rather unnatural one. The analysis of the latter appears to be close to what Russell worked out much later: it is the term substituted for our subject *S* in statements of the logical form ‘*S* is *P*’, traditionally called a description, which causes an unnatural predication. Russell, the inventor of this technical term description, *claims* that “if I say ‘the author of Waverley was a man’, that is not a statement of the form ‘*x* was a man’, and does not have ‘the author of Waverley’ for its subject”.<sup>6</sup> Briefly, such a statement is not a predication. Remarkably, one already finds this sort of analysis in Aristotle, and he hesitates to take these statements as predications (*Ana. post.* I 22, 83a14–16: *mêdamôs katêgorein*). In the one case a predicate is said of a subject, in the other it only appears to be the case:

We argue universally, as follows: one can say truly that the white thing is walking, and that that large thing is a log, and again that the log is large and that the man is walking. Well, speaking in the latter and in the former ways are different. [Barnes’ translation]<sup>7</sup>

The parallels to V 7 seem obvious, but things are not that easy. Notice Aristotle’s use of ‘A man is musical’ as an example of ‘to be’ coincidentally in V 7 (1017a9). By contrast, in *Ana. post.* I 22 ‘The man is walking’ renders a standard categorical predication, although the former statement seems to have the same logical form as the latter (the variation of definite and indefinite article doesn’t matter, since the definite article τὸ occurs in the distinct form ‘The large thing is a log’, too). In the *Analytics*, the statement ‘The large thing is a log’ renders an unnatural predication, or a predication in disguise, because the item which appears to be the logical subject (here: the large thing) is ill-suited to being one (my italics):

For when I say that the white thing is a log, then I say that that which is accidentally white is a log; *and not that the white thing is the underlying subject for the log*; for it is not the case that, being white or just what is some white, it came to be a log, so that it is not a log except accidentally. [Barnes’ translation]<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle rejects the idea that the description ‘the white thing’ is the subject (*to hypokeimenon*) of the predicate ‘log’, and this amounts to the claim that we do

6 B. Russell ‘On Denoting’ in *Mind* 14, 56 (1905), 479–493, 488.

7 83a1–4: ἔστι γὰρ εἰπεῖν ἀληθῶς τὸ λευκὸν βαδίζειν καὶ τὸ μέγα ἐκεῖνο ξύλον εἶναι, καὶ πάλιν τὸ ξύλον μέγα εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀνθρώπον βαδίζειν. ἕτερον δὲ ἔστι τὸ οὕτως εἰπεῖν καὶ τὸ ἐκεῖνως.

8 83a4–9: ὅταν μὲν γὰρ τὸ λευκὸν εἶναι φῶ ξύλον, τότε λέγω ὅτι ᾧ συμβέβηκε λευκῷ εἶναι ξύλον ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ὡς τὸ ὑποκείμενον τῷ ξύλῳ τὸ λευκὸν ἐστι· καὶ γὰρ οὕτε λευκὸν ὃν οὐθ’ ὅπερ λευκὸν τι ἐγένετο ξύλον, ὥστ’ οὐκ ἔστιν ἀλλ’ ἢ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

not get predication in its proper sense.<sup>9</sup> The predication in question is unnatural because the ontological subject is something other than the description (here: *to leukon*), namely “that which happens to be white” (*hō symbebêke leukô einai*).

Taking this for granted, unnatural predication occurs whenever a term substituted for the subject *S* is not a substantial term but a description. This would seem to be all we need for a sufficient understanding of ‘to be’ coincidentally in V 7, and Kahn, in particular, argues in this way.<sup>10</sup> But it does not stand up to scrutiny.

## II

Suppose that, according to *Ana. post.* I 22, ‘to be’ in virtue of itself and ‘to be’ coincidentally result from these two different types of statements.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, Aristotle’s examples in V 7 should display the difference. But the contrary holds for at least one case, namely ‘A man is musical’ (1017a9). Explicitly, the statement renders ‘to be’ coincidentally. However, it is hard to see why its logical form should be defective or unnatural.<sup>12</sup>

In order to preserve his line of argumentation, Kahn claimed that “this form is treated as equivalent to its converse: *the musical (one) is a man*, that is to say, the essential distinction is disregarded”.<sup>13</sup> I agree with his latter claim that the essential distinction is irrelevant here, but his first claim should be doubted:

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<sup>9</sup> Lewis dismisses the idea that “paronymous referring expressions” such as ‘the musical (one)’ are descriptions at all, since they do not refer to a single subject, e. g. Socrates, but to a compound, “Socrates + musical”, see F. A. Lewis ‘Accidental Sameness in Aristotle’ in *Philosophical Studies* 42 (1982), 1–36, 2–5. With respect to the question of reference we should remember that Russell supposes that descriptions don’t have any reference but are ‘devices of quantification’ instead (for a brief summary of Russell’s position see K. Bach ‘Descriptions: Points of Reference’ in M. Reimer & A. Bezuidenhout (eds.) *Descriptions and Beyond* (Oxford 2004) 189–229, esp. 189). First, we have to accept Strawson’s and Donnellan’s referential use of descriptions to make sense of Lewis’ objection. It will suffice for my purpose to concede that ‘the musical’ and ‘the white (thing)’ are (referring indefinite) descriptions, regardless of the question of what exactly the referent might be. Whether Lewis is right or not has no consequences for my considerations.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Questions’, 274, note 51.

<sup>11</sup> My motivation to translate *kath’ hautō* as ‘in virtue of itself’ goes back to *Met.* V 18 where it is taken to derive from *kath’ hō*, ‘in virtue of’.

<sup>12</sup> This observation has already been made by Thorp against Kahn in ‘Aristotle’s use of Categories’, 244.

<sup>13</sup> Questions, 274, note 51.

Aristotle provides a different analysis for each ‘A man is musical’ and ‘Someone musical is a man’. By no means, they can be “treated as equivalent to its converse”.<sup>14</sup>

I shall argue that Aristotle’s distinction does not result from a difference in logical form. The same form as in ‘A man is musical’ is given in his example of ‘to be’ in virtue of itself: ‘A man walks’ or ‘A man is walking’ (1017a29). However, one might object that this claim is based on a misinterpretation of the text. ‘A man walks’ in 1017a29 is not meant to show ‘to be’ in virtue of itself but the whole section a27–30 refers back to the beginning. Therefore, ‘A man is walking’ illustrates ‘to be’ coincidentally again.<sup>15</sup>

This idea is what Ross’s interpretation makes use of: ‘A man is walking’ renders ‘to be’ coincidentally, whereas some essential predications render ‘to be’ in the thing’s own right, namely statements of the form ‘A man is an animal’ or ‘White is a colour’.

There is some textual evidence against this reading. The rule that ‘A man walks’ signifies the same as ‘A man is walking’ does also hold for all other cases, Aristotle continues (*homoiôs kai epi tôn allôn*). What other cases than the ten “figures of predication” in a23 can he be referring to? Since the “figures of predication”, i.e. the Aristotelian categories harbour ‘to be’ in virtue of itself, the example ‘A man walks’ in 1017a29 must still be concerned with ‘be’ in virtue of itself, and not, as Ross has claimed, with ‘to be’ coincidentally.<sup>16</sup> Moreover,

<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, *Ana. post.* I 22 is ambiguous with respect to the *kata symbebêkos*: First, in a statement such as ‘The white thing is a log’, ‘to be a log’ is said coincidentally of the white thing (in contrast to ‘A man is pale’, 83a9–12), second, in ‘A man is white’ the predicate of being white is said coincidentally of a man (in contrast to ‘A man is an animal’, 83a25–30). Thus, the passage is not as clear as scholars have assumed in order to interpret V 7.

<sup>15</sup> Such an alternative reading can be traced back to Alexander of Aphrodisias, see his Commentary *In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria*, CAG Vol. 1 (ed. Hayduck), 371, 29–34. In modern times, it was prominently proposed by W. D. Ross, see his *Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, a revised text with introduction and commentary, vol. I (Oxford repr. 1958), 306–307. Thorp ponders that “Aristotle could have used examples of essential predications to the point he was after, but he used accidental examples because of the evocative power they happened to have [...]”, ‘Aristotle’s use of Categories’, 254. By offering this reading, he weakens much of his critique against Ross.

<sup>16</sup> The phrase *homoiôs kai epi tôn allôn* can often be found in his writings, with reference to the categories in *Topics* I 9, 103b35 and with various references in *Ana. pr.* I 6, 29a39; II 11, 61a31; 21, 67a26; *Ana. post.* I, 12, 77a41; 24, 85a26; II 13, 97a34. As far as I can see, in all cases Aristotle wants to generalize a rule or distinction, but whether the generalization in *Met.* 1017a30 should cover the ten categories or something different is hard to decide definitely. However, I have doubts about Thorp’s paraphrase “and the same holds for cases of essential predications” (*loc. cit.*), since *kai epi tôn allôn* seems to be ill suited to express such a restricted range not mentioned before.



Ross' reading makes the causal conjunction  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$  in a28 pointless since his reading separates a27-30 from a22-27. If the conjunction  $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$  does not introduce a justification for the foregoing claim that 'to be' in virtue of itself ranges over the categories, then it no longer has a grammatical function. To make sense of the conjunction, we must read a22-30 as a unit. Consequently, 'A man is walking' in a29-30 renders 'to be' in virtue of itself.

Furthermore, to abandon the idea of 'A man is walking' as an example of 'to be' in virtue of itself means to end up without any example for that case in V 7. Therefore, Ross' reading has no direct evidence. He claimed that Aristotle's concern is about the categories in terms of what-questions ('What is Socrates?', 'What is white?', 'What is sitting?', and so on). However, a closer look at *Topics* I 9 reveals the inappropriateness of his interpretation. When Aristotle refers to the categories in terms of different types of questions, he uses *ti esti* for the first: *ti esti*, *poson*, *poion*, and so on. By contrast, when he refers to the categories in terms of what-questions, he speaks necessarily of *ousia*!, *poson*, *poion* and so on (103b28). But in V 7, 1017a25, we read *ti esti* for the first category. Therefore, what-questions cannot be at stake.

It is worth asking why Ross's interpretation (that Aristotle refers to the distinction between essential and accidental predication) appears to be convincing although there is no direct textual evidence for it.<sup>17</sup> The reason is our acquaintance with Aristotle's distinction between essential and accidental predications (e.g. to say of a man that he is an animal vs. that he is pale, see e.g. *Met.* IV 4, 1007a20–b1; VI, 1026b35–37). Of course, to be a man is said essentially of Socrates and to be pale coincidentally, but the question in V 7 is rather whether 'to be' is said of Socrates in virtue of himself or coincidentally. To sum up, we still struggle with an explication of why 'A man is musical' should be a case of 'to be' coincidentally, whereas 'A man is walking' renders 'to be' in virtue of itself.

### III

Curiously, Aristotle does not tell us what exactly it means 'to be' coincidentally in V 7. As though this must be obvious, he starts with a threefold distinction of ways in which things are said 'to be' coincidentally and adds some kind of blue-

<sup>17</sup> Note Ross's omission of textual reference to support his analysis of 1017a22–30 (306–307). Instead, he judges that "Aristotle makes his meaning unnecessarily obscure [...]", and that means, Aristotle does not say what Ross expects him to intend. A further evidence against Ross we can find in *Ana. post.* I 22, where 'A man walks' is explicitly not taken as an example of 'to be' coincidentally, but as a proper predication.

print in order to paraphrase each instance of ‘to be’ coincidentally. But his explanations are far from being instructional for modern readers.

Some evidence of what is at stake can be found in 1017a18: the not-pale is said ‘to be’ coincidentally (*to mê leukon einai*). Without doubt, Aristotle makes so-called complete use of ‘is’, which is usually understood in terms of existence. Thus, Kirwan concludes that the concern is about the existence of the predicate ‘not-pale’, but this does not work with the text. According to Aristotle, to say of the not-pale that it is is the same manner of speaking (*houtô de legetai*) as to say that the musical is a man. The ontological worry is not about ‘man’ but about ‘musical’, that is, about the logical subject. Remember Ana. post. I 22, where the concern also is about the not-white being in subject position. Consequently, the statement at issue should rather be something such as ‘The not-pale is a man’. With such a statement, the not-pale is said ‘to be’ coincidentally.<sup>18</sup>

But what does all this mean? I shall make the following proposal. As a fresh start, we can sum up what we are familiar with in Aristotle’s ontology. ‘To be’ is said in many ways, respectively in the ten ways of the categories, and this is the proper sense of to be’ (see *Met.* VI 4, 1027b31: *on tôn kuriôs*). According to Aristotle, ‘to be’ always means to be something, that is, to be of a quality, to be in a relation or to be of a certain substance.<sup>19</sup>

To say of a thing that it is white signifies both that this thing is of a certain quality and that it is one of the things that are.<sup>20</sup> The point at issue is the latter implication: to be of a certain quality necessarily implies to be an entity. As a rule, the subject of a true predication (in Greek: *to hypokeimenon*) is an entity (this lesson we get in the so called ontological square, *Cat.* 1a20-b9, and 2b3-5; 13b27-33). Thus, we may infer that

$$Fa \rightarrow (\exists x) (x = a)^{21}$$

**18** Instead, Kirwan claims: “According to Aristotle ‘walking exists’ is implied by ‘Coriscus walks’ ‘, see his *Notes*, 142. Thus, he concludes that “ ‘the pale (pallor) exists’ signifies ‘the pale qualifies something’ ‘ (140). This may be generally right but appears not to be Aristotle’s concern with respect to ‘to be’ coincidentally. Aristotle takes ‘not-pale’ not as a predicate but as a mere name, as he points out in *Met.* VI, 2, 1026b13–14. It is a name or description for a substance.

**19** We can refer back to Owen’s famous and widely accepted formula that “to be, then, is always to be something or other”, G. E. L. Owen ‘Aristotle on the Snares of Ontology’ in R. Bambrough (ed.) *New Essays in Plato and Aristotle* (London 1965), 69–95, 76.

**20** I fully agree with Kahn here: “In a sentence like *A man is healthy*, the term *is* expresses (or ‘connotes’) primarily the being of the quality health, and only secondarily and indirectly the being of the substance man, insofar as the former depends for its existence upon the latter.” See his ‘Questions’, 260.

**21** Such an inference has already been applied to Aristotle by Michael Wedin, see his ‘Aristotle on the Existential Import of Singular Sentences’ in *Phronesis* 23, 2 (1978), 179–196, 179.

However, to be said 'to be' coincidentally will break ranks.

In *Met.* VII 1, we are told that without qualification (*haplôs*) only substance is said 'to be', that is, only substance is an entity in its strictest sense, whereas quality and quantity are said 'to be' in terms of being a quality of a substance or a quantity of a substance (1028a18-20). This restriction refers back to the focal meaning of the Greek *ôv* in *Met.* IV 2: 'to be' is either said of a substance or with respect to substance. Nowhere in these passages is the *kath' hautô* /*kata symbebêkos*-distinction used to mark off the ontological difference.<sup>22</sup> Thus, there is no reason not to take every categorical predication as rendering 'to be' in the *kath' hautô*-sense, essential predications as well as non-essential ones. I propose that all such predications, if held to be true, imply the subject's being, and this is at issue in *Met.* V 7.

The predication *Fa* is true iff there is an entity *a* with property *F*. It does not matter which of the two lists of categories we take into account when applying such a rule (I refer here to *Topics* I 9). To say of Socrates that he is pale or of the pale that it is a quality makes use of the same sort of implication: Socrates and the pale are both entities. If they were not entities, the statements would be necessarily false.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, for any true predication the subject is an entity. By a copulative 'is', the subject is said 'to be' in virtue of itself. But there are true predications where the subject is not an entity, and this is where 'to be' is said coincidentally.

## IV

One may ask for textual evidence for this reading of V 7. Unfortunately, there is no direct evidence, since there is no explication at all what it means 'to be' in virtue of itself. Our scant information is Aristotle's reference to the ten categories. Moreover, one might disagree with an obvious shift I have made: if my claim is right, to be said 'to be' in virtue of itself in 1017a22-30 cannot be understood as a distinct use of 'is' or 'to be', since it appears in the copulative use. Thus, this interpretation appears first, to be not compelling, and second, to challenge unnecessarily what seems to be obvious.

<sup>22</sup> This can be objected to Kahn who refers to *Zeta* 1 for the contrast between *kata symbebêkos* and *kath' hautô*, 'Questions', 274, note 51. The difference between the pairs *kath' hautô*/*kata symbebêkos* and essential/accidental has already been pointed out by J. Bogen 'Moravcsik on Explanation' in *Synthese* 28, 1 (1974), 19-25, 22.

<sup>23</sup> See *Cat.* 11, 13b16-19: If Socrates is not (*mê ontos holôs*, as Aristotle writes), both statements 'Socrates recovers' and 'Socrates is ill' are false.

On the other hand, we have seen that Ross' and Kahn's reading do not work. Moreover, it can be shown that all ways of being said to 'be' in *Met.* V 7 result of a copulative use of 'is'. I shall start by presenting the advantages of my proposal. First, this reading easily explains why in 1017a18 the not-pale is said 'to be' coincidentally. The not-pale is said 'to be' only because it takes the subject position within this predication.<sup>24</sup> According to this reading, 'to be' is not said in virtue of the logical subject 'the not-pale' itself, even if the predicate is an essential term and 'is' appears in its copulative use. To be an *F* does not necessarily imply to be an entity.

In saying that "it is in this [coincidental] way that the not-pale is said 'to be'" (a18), Aristotle is not concerned with the grammatical function of 'is' but with the question in which way the not-pale is said 'to be' (namely, by being said to be a man). Thus, distinctions in a so called use of 'is' are more or less irrelevant here (this is not an innovative claim, as we will see).<sup>25</sup> Instead, the claim should be this: although the not-pale is said to be a man, it is not an entity. In the same manner, the musical is not an entity insofar as it is said to be a man (to refer back to Aristotle's foregoing example in 1017a17). Rather, it just happens that a man is not-pale or musical. Both items are only coincidentally, and therefore, they are rightly said 'to be' coincidentally.

Second, this reading of V 7 works well with respect to *De Int.* 11, as will be shown. Third, it is supported by the "official definition" (Kirwan) of 'to be coincidentally *F*' as 'to be neither always nor usually *F*' (see *Met.* VI 2, 1026b31–33). We only have to take 'to be an entity' as predicate *F*, what is forbidden in modern logic. The musical is an entity as long as it happens that a man is musical (since then, the description 'musical' refers to a substance), and to be musical does not always hold for a man. Therefore, it is not always true to say that the musical is; it is said 'to be' coincidentally.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Surprisingly, Ross considered the not-pale to have some existence, however: "To these copulative uses of 'is' Aristotle adds in 18, 19 an existential use of it, 'the not-white is'. This, however, can easily be turned into the copulative form 'the not-white is existent'." See his *Commentary*, 306. We should insist that the not-white has no "existence" since 'to be' means to be harbored in one of the categories, which does not hold for the not-white. It is only a sophistical snare to infer from 'the not-white is an *F*' (a log, for example) that 'therefore, the not-white is an entity'.

<sup>25</sup> A similar suggestion, for example, was made by Ross who takes 'to be' coincidentally and 'to be' in virtue of itself as "two main senses of the copulative 'is'", *op. cit.*, 308.

<sup>26</sup> Consequently, ontology should not be concerned with flighty accidentals, as Aristotle recommends in *Met.* VI 2, 1026b25–28. Kirwan (*Notes*, 135) wonders about the definition's misfit to the examples of V 6: Coriscus might always be musical, and some items might only temporarily be a bundle. Nevertheless, the first is a case of being one coincidentally, the latter of being

If such a reading of V 7 is the right one, Aristotle is concerned with the fact that some items such as the not-pale are said 'to be' coincidentally because they coincide in an entity (a18-19: *oti hô symbebêken, ekeino estin*). Hence, his point is an ontological one. To state truly of Socrates that he is a man implies that Socrates is an entity (that is, 'to be' is said in virtue of Socrates himself by the copulative 'is'), but to state truly of the not-pale that it is a man does not imply that the not-pale is an entity. In the latter case, we only want to say that there is an item, denoted as the not-pale, which is a man.<sup>27</sup>

## V

Three tempting conclusions of this reading must be rejected immediately. First, the Greek phrase *to leukon* is ambiguous: it can denote a white thing and the quality white.<sup>28</sup> But we should not infer that 'to be' coincidentally results from a grammatical freak in classical Greek, rendering a predicate and a description from one and the same expression. Things are more complicated.

Second, it appears that this interpretation leads back to the distinction between natural and unnatural predications in *Ana. post.* I 22 because the statement 'The not-pale is a man' takes the form of an unnatural predication. In a natural predication, then, the subject is said 'to be' in virtue of itself, in an unnatural one, 'to be' coincidentally. One might wish to set up the general rule that 'to be' coincidentally emerges when descriptions substitute logical subjects.

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one in virtue of itself, as V 6 says. As a solution, we may point to Aristotle's obvious switch from the criterion *always* to *all*, as it is given in V 9, 1017b36-1018a4: "[...] for universals hold good in their own right and things that are coincidental are not in their own right. But in the case of particulars we do so speak badly, for Socrates and musical Socrates are thought to be the same thing. But Socrates does not apply to a number of things, hence we do not say 'every Socrates' as we say 'every man'." Thus, the pale or musical Coriscus is one coincidentally, but everything will form a bundle if tied together. This extension can be applied to V 7, too: we say that a man is musical, not that man is musical. Also the discussion of *symbebêkos* in V 30 supports this interpretation: "And someone musical might be pale, but since this comes to be neither of necessity nor for the most part, we call it coincidental" (1025a19-21). In the same manner, an entity is neither of necessity nor for the most part musical.

<sup>27</sup> Approximately, this reading can be found in Bäck: "Thus, the not white is, because the log is not white, and the log is." See A. Bäck *Aristotle's Theory of Predication* (Leiden 2000), 69. But his terse analysis does not cover all cases of 'to be' coincidentally, as we will see, nor does it suffice to explain *Met.* 1017a7-30.

<sup>28</sup> For Aristotle's awareness of this ambiguity see *Met.* VII 6, 1031b23-24.

But unfortunately, if we look onto *Met.* V 7 and *De Int.* 11, we will see this is too narrow an explication.

In the latter passage, the natural predication ‘Homer is a poet’ explicitly renders ‘to be’ coincidentally. With respect to this statement, Aristotle asks “Does it follow that he is?” and replies “No, for the ‘is’ is predicated coincidentally of Homer.”<sup>29</sup> Notice how well this passage fits my proposed reading of V 7. To say that Homer is a poet does not necessarily imply that there is a (present) entity called *Homer*. However, there is a significant difference to statements such as ‘The not-pale is a man’ because there is no entity at all which the proper name ‘Homer’ refers to (or, as Weidemann takes it, ‘Homer’ is no “Existenz-prädikat”).<sup>30</sup> From a modern point of view, the name *Homer* has no reference, but the description ‘the not-pale’ has one, namely a present entity which is called ‘the not-pale’.<sup>31</sup>

Third, it is tempting to understand the ontological question of *Met.* V 7 and *De Int.* 11 in terms of pure existence. Then, to say that the not-pale is said ‘to be’ coincidentally is to say that there is no such entity as the not-pale, but only someone who is said to be not-pale, and this again means to negate the existence of the not-pale. But we should at least follow Owen’s claim that “‘A exists’ is expressed as ‘A is something’ in Greek philosophy”.<sup>32</sup> In terms of Aristotle, the reason why Homer is not does not result from the fact that there is no such entity with the properties of Homer. Rather, Homer is not, simply because he is dead and therefore not a man. Kahn rightly interprets the Aristotelian ‘Homer is

<sup>29</sup> 21a25–28: ὥσπερ “Ὁμηρός ἐστὶ τι, οἷον ποιητής· ἄρ’ οὖν καὶ ἔστιν, ἢ οὐ· κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς γὰρ κατηγορεῖται τὸ ἔστιν τοῦ “Ὁμήρου· ὅτι γὰρ ποιητής ἐστιν, ἀλλ’ οὐ καθ’ αὐτό, κατηγορεῖται κατὰ τοῦ Ὁμήρου τὸ ἔστιν. Remarkably, even with reference to this passage Kirwan speaks of “the non-existential being of e.g. the man’s being musical” (144) which is obviously not Aristotle’s concern.

<sup>30</sup> See his German translation of *De Int.* entitled *Aristoteles–Peri hermeneias* (Berlin 1994), 383–384.

<sup>31</sup> As far as I can see, my interpretation of *De Int.* 11 coincides with Wedin’s, see his ‘Aristotle on the Existential Import of Singular Sentences’, esp. 186–187. There is an alternative reading by Dancy, making use of Ross’s interpretation of the *kath’ hauto/kata symbebêkos*-distinction as the well known essential/accidental-distinction. According to Dancy, we must not infer from the accidental predication ‘Homer is a poet’ that Homer exists, but from the essential predication ‘Homer is a man’, that he is. This appears to be convincing, but can be doubted on grounds of the ambiguity of these sentences. ‘Homer is a poet’ does not mean that there is an entity with the property of being a poet, but rather that there was an ancient poet called Homer. In this way, one might utter indignantly that Homer is a man, if someone takes Homer to be the name of a giant in Hesiod. Even then, by no means the existence of Homer is claimed. See R. Dancy ‘Aristotle and Existence’ in *Synthese* 54 (1983), 409–442, 427.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Aristotle on the Snares of Ontology’, 76.

‘as ‘Homer is alive’, so once more, to ‘be’ is to ‘be something’. Consequently, ‘to be’ in the case of ‘Homer is’ means to be a living body and a man rather than just to exist.<sup>33</sup>

Many scholars in the present day follow Quine in a quantificational view of existence, rendering the existence of item *a* as  $\exists a(a \text{ is a man})$ . This has some confusing similarity with the Aristotelian ontology. For Aristotle, ‘to be’ is not to be a value of a bound variable but to be the subject or the predicate of a true predication (Aristotle’s *hypokeimenon* and *legomenon*).<sup>34</sup> To be an entity in terms of Aristotle should be taken in the sense of to be one of the things that are said to be (*ta onta* in Aristotle’s terminology).<sup>35</sup> Hence, we can make use of the categories in order to clarify the question of whether subject *S* is one of the things that is said ‘to be’ in virtue of itself or coincidentally. What is Homer? A man? No, because he is dead, and a dead man is not a man. Homer is not an entity at all. What is the not-pale? A quality? No. It is none of the categories, therefore it is not an entity. What is the musical? An entity? No, not in virtue of itself. The musical is a man and is said to be an entity only insofar as it happens that a man is musical.<sup>36</sup>

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33 The example of the poet Homer in *De Int.* 11 is embedded in a discussion why it is not always true to say that some particular man (here: Homer) is a man. To call a dead man a man is false, Aristotle explains. He shows a keen understanding of the difference we make between predicates and descriptions, calling the latter a name (*onoma*). We may say that Homer is a man, but if we substitute man with the definition of man (*ean logoi ant’ onomatôn legôntai*, 21a29–30), the statement will be wrong, since Homer is not a living body. For my reference to Kahn see his ‘Why Existence does not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy’ in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 58 (1976), 323–334, 326.

34 One may generally criticise Quine’s quantificational view of existence in saying that the question of quantification is not what philosophers usually have in mind when they ask whether an item exists or not. For a discussion of the difference between ontological and quantificational questions see K. Fine ‘The Question of Ontology’ in D. Chalmers, D. Manley & R. Wasserman *Metametaphysics—New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology* (Oxford 2009), 157–177.

35 I agree with Dancy that even for Greek statements of the form ‘Socrates is’, “there is plainly no special existential sense here; there is a merely syntactic difference between ‘to be’ followed by a predicate and ‘to be #’. The latter results from truncating a predication. So even ‘to be #’ is, implicitly, to be something.”, ‘Aristotle and Existence’, 419. For this reason, it is tempting but misleading to equate Aristotle’s concern with Russell’s, refuting Meinong’s claim that every denoting phrase stands for an object. See ‘On Denoting’, 482.

36 One might refer to the ambiguity of ‘musical’ in order to weaken this method. Without doubt, the abstract property ‘THE musical’ can be taken as an entity. However, we should not infer from the denoting phrase ‘the musical (one)’ given in a true predication that there is an abstract entity such as ‘THE musical’.



## VI

This enables us to explain why the existential use of ‘to be’ in V 7 is not discussed. Every copulative use of ‘is’ renders the logical subject as something which is said to be, either in virtue of itself or coincidentally. If you take the Aristotelian categories as covering what there is, you may say that to be said ‘to be’ in virtue of itself means to exist. However, this is not what scholars wanted to know. Rather, they ask why Aristotle was not concerned with the complete use of ‘is’ in contrast to the incomplete use. We may say that it falls short of what lies in Aristotle’s interest in V 7. This gets obvious with respect to the veridical use of ‘is’ which seems to be discussed in the sequel to V 7:

Again, ‘to be’ and ‘is’ signify that a thing is true, and ‘not to be’ that it is not true but a falsehood, equally in the case of affirmation and of denial; as for instance that Socrates is musical, that this is true, or that Socrates is not pale, that it is true; and ‘a diagonal is not commensurable’, that it is a falsehood. [Kirwan’s translation]<sup>37</sup>

Conspicuously, we get a copulative use of ‘is’ that signifies truth: ‘Socrates is musical’ (not: ‘it is the case that ...’). With respect to this passage, Kahn speaks of “the veridical connotation attached to a copula construction” and of a “veridical copula”.<sup>38</sup> Taking up his terminology, we may sum up that the copulative use of ‘is’ renders (i) a veridical connotation (with respect to uttered statements) and (ii) a connotation that the subject *S* is either said ‘to be’ in virtue of itself or that it is said to ‘be’ coincidentally. Such considerations we do not find in modern discussions and they make V 7 unique. For any uttered predication of the form ‘*S* is *P*’, there is a connotation with respect to the ontological status of *S* and a connotation with respect to truth, both attached to the copulative ‘is’.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding, I hesitate to claim that the veridical and the complete use of ‘is’ do not matter at all in V 7. Rather, I recommend to take Kahn’s general caveat to heart: “But I insist that if we begin to interpret the concept of Being by looking for existential or copula uses of the verb, we will not only make unnecessarily trouble for ourselves; we may miss the real point. We will fail to

<sup>37</sup> 1017a31-34: ἔτι τὸ εἶναι σημαίνει καὶ τὸ ἔστιν ὅτι ἀληθές, τὸ δὲ μὴ εἶναι ὅτι οὐκ ἀληθές ἀλλὰ ψεῦδος, ὁμοίως ἐπὶ καταφάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως, οἷον ὅτι ἔστι Σωκράτης μουσικός, ὅτι ἀληθές τοῦτο, ἢ ὅτι ἔστι Σωκράτης οὐ λευκός, ὅτι ἀληθές.

<sup>38</sup> C. Kahn ‘Retrospect on the Verb ‘to be’ and the Concept of Being’ in K. Knuuttila & J. Hintikka (eds.) *The Logic of Being* (Dordrecht 1986), 1-28, 9 and 24, note 23.

<sup>39</sup> I take this explication to be more precise than Ross’s, who explains the omission of the existential use of ‘is’ in V 7 thus: “The reason is that, though logically the existential ‘is’ may be distinguishable from the copulative, metaphysically it is not” (*Commentary*, 308).



grasp the essential feature of the Greek concept of Being.”<sup>40</sup> Instead, Aristotle works out different connotations of the verb ‘to be’ in its copulative use, and this is why he can speak of ἔστι and ὅν interchangeably. From a grammatical point of view, the various uses of ἔστι and the uses of the participle ὄν might differ greatly, but with respect to Aristotle’s concern there is no difference. He is so focused on ontology in *Met.* V 7 that a logical analysis of the various uses of ‘is’ lies far from his interest, and the same holds for Book VI 2 when he discusses once more the various ways in which ‘to be’ is said. In arguing this way, the above two objections against my reading can be refused.

## VII

Notwithstanding, one notorious problem in V 7 remains. Why, the phrase ‘A man is musical’ is a case in which ‘to be’ is said coincidentally? Let’s have a closer look at these lines. The section starts with a distinction of three types of predication in which ‘to be’ is said coincidentally: (i) a non-essential predicate is said of a description (‘someone just is musical’), (ii) a non-essential predicate is said of a substantial term (‘a man is musical’), and (iii) an essential-predicate is said of a description (‘someone musical is a man’).

The way of speaking in all these three cases, Aristotle continues, is similar to saying that someone musical builds, but his explication arouses perplexity in modern readers: “because being musical coincides in a housebuilder *or* a housebuilder in someone musical”. In all such cases, Aristotle continues, *this is that* signifies that something coincides in something, and this means, something which is said ‘to be’ coincides in an entity. How could Aristotle not have realized that he has slipped into a use of ‘is’ in terms of ‘is the same as’?<sup>41</sup>

The answer might be easy. From his point of view, there is no identity claimed in ambiguous statements such as ‘The just is the musical’, since this

<sup>40</sup> ‘Why Existence does not Emerge as a Distinct Concept in Greek Philosophy’, 330.

<sup>41</sup> Kirwan’s verbal translation of *tode einai tode* as “this is this” retains the vagueness of the Greek phrase. Either ‘is’ has to be understood in the sense of ‘something is said of something’ or that ‘one thing is identical with another’. As we can see in *Met.* VI 2, 1026b14-21, some ancients took the logical subject and predicate to be equivalent to each other, which appears odd to us. Aristotle reports that the Sophists are concerned with questions such as whether, if a grammarian became musical, then necessarily, the musical would become grammatical, too. As long as we take ‘grammarian’ as the logical subject and ‘musical’ as the predicate, such questions make few sense. Nonetheless, this is far from being self-evident, as Ramsey has shown to us. See F. Ramsey ‘Universals’ in *Mind* 34, 136 (1925), 401-417.

would mean that being just is identical with being musical. In order to see what is at issue, we usually rephrase such a statement into ‘The just one is the musical one’, but this is not Aristotle’s strategy. Russell analyzes identity claims by saying that we “assert an identity of denotation with a difference in meaning”.<sup>42</sup> Such a distinction between denotation and meaning, introduced by Frege in 1892, is useful but was out of reach in Aristotle’s days. Consequently, as long as we do not distinguish between meaning and reference we should not say that both items are the same.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, Aristotle cannot analyze statements such as ‘The musical is the just’ in terms of a referential use of the predicate term, and consequently, he must not render them as identity claims. As long as *dikaion* (‘just’) is taken as a predicate, the verb ‘is’ functions as a copula. This may be the reason why Aristotle was not concerned with ‘is’ in the sense of ‘is the same as’, even if the Greek employs such a grammatical construction.<sup>44</sup> However, he was fully aware of the oddness of ‘The musical is just’ or ‘Someone musical is just’, as we have learnt in *Ana. post.* I 22. He was not concerned with their peculiar logical form but realizes the ontological oddity arising from such statements. In order to avoid it, he made the distinction we are faced with in V 7: to be said ‘to be’ in virtue of itself and coincidentally. This is a purely ontological distinction, and the logical analysis of statements rendering ‘to be’ coincidentally obviously lies beyond Aristotle’s focus in V 7.

Maybe for this reason, his general analysis is rather sketchy: in all three cases something coincides in something, and the decisive question will be what coincides in what. He adds a distinct analysis for each case. Two of them are unproblematic, namely analysis (i) and (iii).

<sup>42</sup> ‘On denoting’, 479-493, 483. And likewise: “Thus when we say ‘Scott is the author of *Waverley*’ or ‘men are the same as featherless bipeds’, we are asserting an identity of denotation, and this assertion is worth making because of the diversity of meaning.” See ‘Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description’ in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* New Series 11 (1910-1911), 108-128, 121.

<sup>43</sup> According to Aristotle, to be numerically one implies to have the same definition, see *Met.* IV 4, 1006b26-27. Kirwan has observed this difference aptly with respect to V 6, 1015b24-27: “‘Coriscus’ and ‘the musical’ can be used as designations of the same thing, and Aristotle actually slips into talking of sameness at b27. But the appearance is misleading. b23 says that the musical and Coriscus are one ‘because one coincides in the other’; these items, then, are regarded by Aristotle as *different* things, whose relationship of coinciding combines them into a kind of unity.” See his *Notes*, 134.

<sup>44</sup> For a helpful discussion see D. Bostock ‘Plato on ‘Is Not’ in *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 2 (1984), 89-119, esp. 90-92.

- (i) 'Someone just is musical': the musical and the just both coincide in the same entity, and this is why the just is said to be.
- (ii) 'A man is musical' because it coincides in an entity.
- (iii) 'Someone musical is a man': the musical coincides in an entity which itself is said of the musical, and this is why the musical is said to be.

Notice that the analyses in (ii) and (iii) differ. Kirwan's vague formulation of (ii) "because it coincides in a thing that is" fully displays the vagueness of the Greek phrase *hoti tô ontî symbebêke*. The grammatical subject for the verb *symbebêke* remains obscure. Much the same holds for the subsequent explication of type (ii) in 1017a20: "because the former holds of a thing-that-is" (*hoti ontî ekeino hyparchei*). What does the pronoun *ekeino* refer to, the predicate 'musical' or the logical subject 'man'?

Both the statement 'A man is musical' as well as Aristotle's analysis lead straight into a dilemma which can be regarded as one reason why interpreters struggle so much with this case of 'to be' coincidentally. The claim that the pronoun *ekeino* refers to the predicate 'musical' understands the subject 'man' as the entity in question, and this eliminates the difference between the analysis of (ii) and (iii): in both cases, the musical coincides in an entity, namely 'man'. Why, if this is the case, does Aristotle offer a different analysis for each type of statement?<sup>45</sup> Alternatively, taking *ekeino* as referring to the phrase 'a man' violates the Aristotelian rule that essentials never coincide. A man is always essentially a man, not coincidentally. Hence, every solution to this dilemma must be based on a compromise.

Even though the second proposal does seem unacceptable with respect to what we are familiar with (namely that 'man' cannot coincide in an entity), I shall argue for choosing it. In *Met.* V 6, while discussing the various uses of 'being one', Aristotle tells us that 'a man' and 'a musical man' are said to be one coincidentally either because the musical coincides in the substance of man or because both the genus 'man' as well as the predicate 'musical' coincide in a certain particular thing, e.g. Coriscus. At first sight, the latter claim looks disastrous in the light of Aristotelian essentialism. Genera do not coincide, one might want to insist. To avoid ontological concern about genus and species, Aristotle adds a twofold distinction regarding how an item may coincide in an

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<sup>45</sup> This is why I do not regard Kahn's solution as convincing, taking 'A man is musical' as "equivalent" to 'Someone musical is a man', see 'Questions', 274, note 51. In an effort to provide an explicit translation, Fine and Irwin translate "it is because <the coincident—musical, for instance —> is coincidental to the thing that is <for instance, the man>.", see *Aristotle—Introductory Readings*, Translated with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary by T. Irwin and G. Fine (Indianapolis 1996). In doing so, they also eliminate the difference between the analysis of (ii) and (iii).

entity: the genus coincides in a substance whereas the predicate ‘musical’ coincides as a state or affection of a substance (1015b32–34).<sup>46</sup> Hence, even if a man is essentially a man, ‘man’ coincides in Coriscus as does ‘musical’. One may feel puzzled about such a claim raised by Aristotle himself, and moreover, it is hard to see his motivation behind the two options that either ‘musical’ coincides in ‘man’ or both in a particular thing.

Back to V 7, we may keep in mind that something is said ‘to be’ coincidentally if  $S$  in ‘ $S$  is  $P$ ’ is not an entity in itself, but coincides in an entity. Is there any way of understanding ‘A man is musical’ in a sense that both ‘man’ and ‘musical’ coincide in an entity? We should be clear about the fact that there must be a way to solve problem (i) and (ii) formulated at the beginning.

I propose to take ‘A man is musical’ in 1017a9 in the sense of ‘A man is musical (a dog is not)’. In terms of logic, we should say that ‘if  $x$  is musical, then  $x$  is a man’:  $\forall x(Ax \rightarrow Mx)$ . Regarding V 6, we may conclude that in a sentence such as ‘A *man* is musical (a dog is not)’ both the genus and the affection of the substance coincide in one particular thing. By such statements, we do not want to say of a particular man that he is musical but that there is something for which being a man and being musical both hold good.

This solution to the dilemma might be regarded as a dodge. There is no hint that Aristotle understood the statement ‘A man is musical’ in the sense of  $\forall x(Ax \rightarrow Mx)$ , but unfortunately, there is no hint at all in which way we should read it. At least, it has to be understood in a rather unusual sense if we are to get out of the dilemma. Both, ‘to be’ in virtue of itself and ‘to be’ coincidentally, emerge from the same logical form ‘ $S$  is  $P$ ’. Then, in one and the same grammatical form ‘A man is musical’, ‘to be’ is said either in virtue of itself or coincidentally due to the logical ambiguity of the statement. Neither here nor elsewhere does Aristotle disambiguate statements by paraphrasing them in the way we are used to. Instead, we get a blueprint in V 7 of how to understand the three statements at issue. It can be taken as evidence for my proposal.

‘A man is musical’, too, he tells us, should be understood in the sense of ‘Someone musical builds’ (a10-13: “[...] these things are said to be in a similar way as we say that someone musical builds”). If, then, from a logical point of view, ‘someone musical’ has a referential use, ‘man’ must also have one. In the same manner that we say that, according to Aristotle, not the musical by itself is an entity but coincides in an entity, we must say that ‘man’ is not an entity

<sup>46</sup> A parallel to this claim can be found in V 2, 1013b34-1014a1 where being Policlitus coincides in a sculptor, and the same holds for the species and genus of Policlitus, that is ‘man’ and ‘animal’. Jaeger’s textual emendation in line a6 does not change much, since the species ‘man’ is already mentioned in a3.

here but coincides in an entity (and this is the case for 'if  $x$  is musical, then  $x$  is a man'). It is hard to specify in which way 'A man is musical' has to be disambiguated if 'man' is said 'to be' coincidentally. But the following can be said with certainty: in such cases, 'a man' must have the same semantic function and ontological value as 'someone musical'. Maybe, then, we should render *anthrōpos* here as 'someone human' or 'some human being'.<sup>47</sup>

Still, we do not know in which entity 'man' coincides here. Due to the ambiguity of the Greek terms *onti* and *ekeino* in a21, there is no textual evidence for the sort of entity Aristotle had in mind. The most dubious case of 'to be' coincidentally has the weakest explication. With respect to V 6, it appears that both 'man' and 'musical' coincide in the same entity, namely an individual. But given this, we end up eliminating the difference between analysis (i) and (ii), which should be avoided. Moreover, in *De Int.* 11, to be said 'to be' coincidentally also appears where no entity is given. Maybe the two options in V 6, 1015b30-34 for the entity in question ('musical' coincides in 'man' or both in Coriscus) can be taken as a sign of Aristotle's lack of interest in a precise analysis. As long as the logical subject itself is not an entity (e.g. the not-pale or the musical), 'to be' is said coincidentally, and this might be his only concern. The different analysis of 'A man is musical' and 'The house builder is musical' might result from the different ways in which 'man' and 'house builder' coincide in an entity.

By contrast, to reject the idea of essential properties such as 'man' coinciding in an entity will mean to end up struggling with an explication of why 'A man is musical' renders 'to be' coincidentally. If one insists on a reading that 'to be' in virtue of itself only appears in essential predications, one must wonder why Aristotle tells us about the not-pale and the musical which are said 'to be' coincidentally, instead of simply talking about accidental predications such as 'Socrates is pale'. According to the proposal given, we might say that even 'man' is said 'to be' coincidentally in some instances, even if to be a man is said per se of Coriscus.

## VIII

If my suggestions are right, there will be a way of dealing with all the four problems listed at the beginning. As far as I can see, there is no alternative reading

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<sup>47</sup> Once more, we see the inappropriateness of the essential/accidental-distinction for this discussion. If 'A man is musical' has to be taken in the sense of 'Someone musical builds', the difference between the substantial term *anthrōpos* and the accidental *mousikos* has to be irrelevant.

that does so. By no means do I take my reading as compelling. Aristotle's sketchy explanations in V 7 do not provide readers with sufficient evidence. But this must not discourage us to make good sense out of the passage. Take V 7 as a test of whether our theory of Aristotle's ontology works well. As long as we are confused about his words we have not yet grasped his concept of being sufficiently.

According to my reading, Aristotle's concern in V 7, 1017a7-35 is about some connotations given by the copulative use of 'is'. One is a veridical connotation, another the ontological affirmation of the logical subject. Since the latter does not hold for all cases of predications, Aristotle distinguishes two ways of being said to be an entity. Some items can be said to be in virtue of itself, others are only said to be coincidentally. Unsurprisingly, the ten categories cover all Aristotelian entities. Other entities are but sophistical illusions. Items such as the not-pale can be said to be only coincidentally. I conclude that Aristotle's concern by distinguishing 'to be' in virtue of itself and 'to be' coincidentally is about ontology and ontological fallacies.